



ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR

01 April 2008 – 31 March 2009

Mrs Gillian Yarham
Chairman Parish Council

Chairman's Report

This has been an especially busy year for the Council and much has been achieved, despite the often negative press and comments from members of the public that have surrounded this Council.

The Council has taken its obligations as an employer seriously, worked within employment legislation and is hopeful that it has put in place the relevant procedures to ensure that it maintains a duty of care to all employees. The Council welcomed Miss Joanne Booth to the post of Office Administration Assistant in May and she has settled into local government life seamlessly.

The Council started the year with a vacancy for a Parish Councillor which was filled by Cllr. Dave Homer at an uncontested election. We were sorry to lose Mr Jason Russell in July but welcomed Cllr. Paul Berry who replaced him following a contested election in September. Some may be alarmed to learn that the contested election cost local Council Tax payers £4,453.60, but that is the price of democracy and it was the want of ten electors that demanded a bye-election.

Investigations into the cause of the cracks in the main hall at Billingshurst Village Hall are complete, and it has been confirmed that the problem is not as a result of subsidence but a combination of a number of factors. Repair works are due to start imminently but we do hope to minimise disruption to our users. The process to separate and hand over the running of the Village Hall charity to locally appointed trustees is ongoing and in the hands of the Council's solicitors.

The Council has had a number of guest speakers at its meetings this year including:

- Mr Bryan Vines, Transport Manager at Horsham District Council, to discuss the parking issues in Billingshurst and plans by Horsham District Council to introduce charging in the library car park. The Council is pleased that this does seem to have created parking spaces available to ensure shoppers can park easily and continue to use our local traders.
- Mrs Alison Robinson, Manager of the Billingshurst Children and Family Centre, attended the Council's meeting in July to outline the services available at the new Children and Family Centre.
- Mr Ken Johnson of Billingshurst Community Partnership reported on the outcome of the Sustainable Communities research to understand the economy of Billingshurst and its surrounding communities. The Parish Council has agreed to support the Community Partnership in their investigation into four key projects: retail, community shop, marketing and publicity and car parking and community transport.
- Mr Tom Crowley, Chief Executive, and Mrs Liz Kitchen, Leader, of Horsham District Council attended the meeting of the Council in March and said they appreciated their good relationship with this Quality Council. As a result of the meeting, Mr Crowley did arrange for the long stay parking discs for workers in the car park behind the Six Bells to be made available on Saturdays, as well as Monday to Friday. Mr Crowley also visited Billingshurst for a walk-about to see for himself the impact that parking problems had on the village, as did our MP Rt Hon Francis Maude.

Members of the public are always welcome to attend meetings of the Council and its committees - dates and times of meetings can be found on our noticeboards at Jengers Mead, Village Green, Billingshurst Village Hall, Adversane Hall and Five Oaks and on our website. Our main Council meeting is the first Wednesday of the month.

I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to the Parish Council staff for their support and hard work during the year in spite of many interruptions to their work when dealing with visitors to the Parish Office, with the enormous number of telephone calls, emails, letters and the many other calls upon their time serving a Council the size of Billingshurst. I would also like to include a special thanks to the Parish Clerk for all her support during this troubled year to a Chairman who found the job much more difficult and stressful than expected.

Planning and Environment Committee Report

This committee has met twice every month to synchronise with the statutory time limit to respond to the local planning authority on planning applications. This year the Council has commented on approximately 144 planning applications for this parish. Residents who wish to make the Council aware of their concerns about any planning application are welcomed to attend our meetings and address the Committee, or submit their comments to us in writing, ensuring that a copy is also sent to the local planning authority – Horsham District Council.

The Council met with representatives of Saxon Weald and Horsham District Council to discuss the planning application for the Townlands site. The Parish Council were dismayed to see that the final planning application for the site was still too overbearing for this prominent entrance into Billingshurst's Conservation Area and objected most strongly. Horsham District Council refused the application and there has been no further news on the future of this site.

Representatives from this Committee were pleased to be given a tour of the eco-friendly homes in Arun Crescent, off Arun Road, and commend Saxon Weald for their commitment to the environment and sustainable building.

The Council has continued to pursue funding from planning obligations funds arising from development in the parish and is pleased to report that the Council has received funds to replace the noticeboard in Jengers Mead, 50% of the cost towards the new bus shelter in Natts Lane, new railings for Station Road Gardens and three new litter bins for Lower Station Road recreation ground.

In the autumn the Council produced its Parish Plan, which outlines a plan of action for the Council for the next five years; the Council is already on the path to meeting some of its agreed actions. A synopsis of the Parish Plan was sent to every household and copies of the full document are available from the Village Hall.

Perhaps the most significant achievement of this Committee and indeed that of the Council was the production of the Billingshurst Parish Design Statement this year. It is a record of the visual characteristics of the parish and can be used as a material consideration when responding to planning applications to the local planning authority. The Parish Council was delighted that Horsham District Council commended the Council on a job well done and adopted the Design Statement as a Supplementary Planning Document as part of the Local Development Framework. However the Committee will not rest on its laurels and will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the Design Statement with a view to reviewing it in the future.

Finance & General Purposes Committee Report

The Committee has reviewed the Council's Risk Assessment and has completed the registration of all its property with HM Land Registry, a project which it started last year.

A revised publication scheme under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 was introduced for 01 January 2009, and the Council has handled seven requests under this legislation this year.

The Budget Sub-Committee faced some tough decisions this year setting the annual budget for the Council and was pleased to be able to reduce the precept (the Parish Council element of the Council Tax) by 0.1%. The Committee agreed to publish the Council's budget widely and this can be found on our website at www.billingshurst.gov.uk

The Council's income for the financial year was £301,840 from the precept of £246,147, bank interest of £20,296 up 8% on last year, environmental cleansing grant of £8,827 from Horsham District Council and various charges for Council services.

The Council's expenditure this year was £269,033 including £20,257 payment for the loan for the Village Hall annexe, £1,895 to replace the ageing photocopier in the Parish Office, £5,863 to remove the base of the former cricket pavilion and £7,968 professional fees for the structural engineer working on Billingshurst Village Hall. The Council's named reserves have increased from £121,623 at the start of the financial year to £212,229, but the Council's general reserve has decreased from £286,493 to £228,807 at year end. This is slightly under one year's precept and in accordance with audit regulations guidance that the Council should keep approximately one year's precept in reserve for contingency.

For the coming financial year, the Council will be reducing some of its named reserves with expenditure of £29,476 on Billingshurst Village Hall for structural repairs, a new scheme of Christmas lighting costing £18,000 and the upgrade of street lighting in Lower Station Road and Natts Lane totalling £40,000.

| Reserves at 31 March 2009 | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Open Spaces | £4,491 |
| Cemetery | £4,000 |
| Village Hall | £82,032 |
| Memorial Gardens | £45,000 |
| Civil Emergency | £1,200 |
| Lighting | £40,000 |
| Play Equip | £22,000 |
| IT | £3,005 |
| Xmas Lighting | £7,500 |
| Billifest | £1 |
| Community Event 2008 | £3,000 |
| | £212,229 |

Year End Accounts 01 April 2008 to 31 March 2009

| 31 March 2008 | INCOME | 31 March 2009 |
|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| £ | | £ |
| 15,178 | Parks and Open Spaces | 920 |
| 5,799 | General Admin | 7,193 |
| 27,190 | Salaries | 226 |
| 12,620 | Highways | 15,669 |
| 1 | Public Lighting | 4 |
| 223,603 | Precept | 246,147 |
| 18,963 | Interest | 20,296 |
| | One Off | 9,740 |
| | Void Chqs | 392 |
| | POSB | 1,253 |
| 303,354 | | 301,840 |

| | EXPENDITURE | |
|----------------|------------------------|----------------|
| 61,571 | Parks and Open Spaces | 54192 |
| 46,608 | General Admin | 49561 |
| 98,199 | Salaries & staff costs | 112445 |
| 37,545 | Village Hall | 20989 |
| 5,729 | Highways | 2666 |
| 2,340 | Public Lighting | 2925 |
| 495 | s137 | 551 |
| 3,094 | Election | 4634 |
| | One Off | 21070 |
| 255,581 | | 269,033 |

| | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| 47,775 | Net Income/Expenditure | 32,807 |
| | Reverse VH VAT Debtor | 113 |
| | | 32,920 |
| 31/03/2009 | Balance B/Fwd | 408116 |
| | Plus Net Income/Expenditure | 32,920 |
| 31/03/2008 | New Balance | 441,036 |

Donations were made to the following local organisations:

| Date | Organisation | Amount |
|------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| 30/07/2008 | Victim Support Sussex | £50.00 |
| 10/12/2008 | Billingshurst Community Transport | £1,000.00 |
| 10/12/2008 | Billingshurst Community Partnership | £1,800.00 |
| 28/01/2009 | Royal British Legion | £16.50 |
| 21/02/2009 | Billifest | £1,998.68 |
| 25/02/2009 | St Marys Church (lighting) | £175.00 |
| 25/03/2009 | West Sussex Association for the Blind | £100.00 |
| 25/03/2009 | Billingshurst Scouts and Guides | £50.00 |
| 25/03/2009 | Classrooms for Kenya | £30.00 |
| | | £5,220.18 |

Property Committee Report

The Council was delighted to see the opening of the much awaited swimming pool at Billingshurst Leisure Centre this year, closely followed by the Billingshurst Children and Family Centre. Both centres offer first class facilities for our expanding population and are well used.

Work will start shortly on the eagerly anticipated improvements to the street lighting in Lower Station Road and Natts Lane, and the Council is particularly pleased that a light will be installed outside the skate park in Natts Lane. The Council has also agreed to enter into the PFI agreement for the maintenance of its street lighting with West Sussex County Council and looks forward to proposed improvements to the lighting stock.

After almost two years of work preparing a planning application, search of underground utilities and grant funding applications, a new bus shelter was installed in Natts Lane. The Council is grateful to West Sussex County Council for providing 50% of the funds from their bus shelter grants scheme and Horsham District Council for providing the remainder from s106 planning obligation funds.

Following the survey of all the Parish Council trees last year, the Council carried out a programme of tree surgery in accordance with the survey and sadly had to lose the beech tree in the churchyard which was infected with Ganoderma adspersum causing internal decay.

Billingshurst Community Partnership successfully applied and received funding for the two goal units and basketball post at Lower Station Road recreation ground which were installed in time for the school holidays.

The Parish Council is grateful to the Parochial Church Council for re-painting the churchyard railings with hammerite paint supplied by the Council. S106 planning obligation funds were used to replace the noticeboard in Jengers Mead, which was crafted by a local carpenter. Dog fouling continues to be a problem in certain areas of the parish; the Committee agreed to install a dog litter bin in the playing field at Five Oaks.

This year saw the return of a Fireworks Display to Billingshurst, and thanks must be recorded to Mr Nick Cruse whose hard work and determination brought this community event to Jubilee Fields.

The Council agreed to install a bench on Adversane Green in memory of the late Mrs Bettina Humphrey and in recognition of all that she had done for the Adversane Hall during her years as a Trustee.

We again are very grateful to the Billingshurst Family Church for community work which this year included gardening work to the flowerbeds in the car park in Jubilee Fields, on the village green and the planters in the High Street.

Station Road Gardens Committee

The Parish Council gave the Station Road Gardens Committee formal approval to proceed at their meeting in January 2009, and agreed to provide match funds of £40,000 from its current reserves. The overall project cost will be around £400,000 and the initial bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund has been submitted.

The Council has given its approval to the formation of a Friends Group whose aims and objectives are:

1. To lead and promote the enhancement, improvement and proper management of the public amenities of Station Road Gardens Billingshurst.
2. Ensure that all work undertaken is for the benefit and protection of the environment.
3. To raise funds and enable local action to enhance and improve the Gardens.
4. To liaise and work with other organisations to achieve its aims and objectives.

The Friends Group would welcome new volunteers to assist with the Gardens project, and if you would like to find out more, please contact the Parish Clerk.

During the year, the Parish Council responded to the following consultations on behalf of the local community:

- Horsham District Community Partnership Visioning Report
- South East Coast NHS - Our NHS our future review
- DCLG - The Making and Enforcement of Byelaws
- The NHS Constitution
- DCLG Communities in Control: Codes of Conduct for Local Authority Members and Employees
- WSCC Planning Billingshurst Primary Schools for the Future
- WSCC Statement of Partnership with Local Councils
- Royal West Sussex NHS Trust and Worthing and Southlands Hospitals NHS Trust proposed merger
- The Boundary Committee for England: Final Recommendations for the Electoral Review of West Sussex
- Department for Communities and Local Government consultation on Communities in Control: Real people, real power: Code of recommended practice on local authority publicity
- Horsham District Community Partnership Sustainable Community Strategy
- Partial Review of the South East Plan - Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs.
- Horsham District Council Local Development Framework to 2018 – Reserve Housing Preferred Options.
- West of Bewbush Submission Joint Area Action Plan.
- Horsham District Housing Strategy Consultation Draft.
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)
- Planning White Paper

And Finally,

We have much to look forward to in the coming year including the upgraded lighting in Lower Station Road and Natts Lane, a new scheme of Christmas lighting for the High Street and Jengers Mead, a newly repaired and redecorated village hall complete with an office for the local Police Community Support Officers and the first stages of work to create Station Road Gardens.

I am particularly grateful to those members of our community that have given their time so freely for the benefit of others. The role of Chairman is particularly demanding in such a large parish and my colleagues and Council staff have embraced new projects with relish and continued their programme of improvements for the benefit of the wider community despite the Council's own internal issues and I am grateful to my colleagues for their support. I have not stood for nomination as Chairman this year and am pleased to hand back the role to Gavin Collins who has the experience and stamina for the challenges in the year ahead.

Gillian Yarham

Billingshurst Parish Council at 31 March 2009

Chairman: Mrs Gillian Yarham **Clerk:** Mrs Beverley Bell
Vice-Chairman: Mr Jake Edsor **Deputy Clerk:** Mrs Wendy Wright

Council Offices

The Billingshurst Village Hall,
Roman Way,
Billingshurst,
West Sussex
RH14 9QW.

Tel: 01403 782555
Fax: 01403 787699

Email: council@billingshurst.gov.uk

| Parish Councillors 31 March 2009 | | |
|---|---|--------------|
| Mr B. L. Barnes | 13 Carpenters, Billingshurst | 01403 780660 |
| Mr P.M. Berry | 8 Nightingale Walk, Billingshurst | 07881 825517 |
| Mr M. Bobker | 38 Rowan Drive, Billingshurst | 01403 783809 |
| Mr S. N. Buck | 66 Arun Road, Billingshurst | 01403 782599 |
| Mrs H. Clarke | 23 Forge Way, Billingshurst | 01403 785498 |
| Mr G. R. Collins | 3 Cranham Avenue, Billingshurst | 07912 368805 |
| Mr J. H. Edsor | 7 Cranham Avenue, Billingshurst | 07760 255433 |
| Mr A. C. Grant | Tanners Cottage, Lordings Road, Adversane | 01403 784165 |
| Mr C. P. H. Griffin | Smithy House, Stane Street, Five Oaks | 07803 908695 |
| Mr D. A. K. Homer | 24 Coombe Hill, Billingshurst | 01403 782824 |
| Mr P. T. Leaney | 11 Rowan Drive, Billingshurst | 01403 783812 |
| Mr R. M. Margetts | 47 Coombe Hill, Billingshurst | 01403 784487 |
| Mr C. Milne | 8 Rosehill, Billingshurst | 01403 785205 |
| Mr D. F. Rands | 62 Arun Road, Billingshurst | 01403 783551 |
| Mrs G. Yarham | 9 Carpenters, Billingshurst | 01403 782282 |

The Council was formed in 1894. There are currently 15 Parish Councillors. The next Parish Council elections are due in May 2011.

The **full Council** meets the first Wednesday of each month and has four standing Committees:-

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Planning and Environment | meets monthly (sometimes with an extra 'Plans only' meeting being necessary) |
| Property | meets monthly |
| Finance and General Purposes | meets monthly |
| Station Road Gardens | meets monthly |

Each standing Committee includes the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council. The Council's Chairman and Vice-Chairman, together with membership of Committees are elected in May of each year at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

The Council has three Sub-Committees:-

Cemetery
Christmas Lights
Working Practices